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AUTHOR Lynch, Richard L.; Padilla, Michael J.
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ABSTRACT

This paper describes a 3-year project that combines classroom and real-life experiences to change how teachers are taught and learn to teach. The University of Georgia's College of Education developed a teacher education model that teaches and places prospective teachers in the context in which they will work (the classroom) and in the context in which their students will work (community and workplace settings). Participants include college faculty, business and industry partners, school administrators, the local Chamber of Commerce, and academic and occupational teachers from six counties. This project emphasizes four types of activities: conceptual framework, professional development, program design, and evaluation. College faculty complete activities that teach them how to prepare future teachers to make classroom teaching and learning more relevant to the work world. They learn about current applications of content area disciplines in workplaces and what is expected of workers in today's work settings. Specific program components include: pre- professional courses, community work experiences, seminars, and disciplinary courses. Data collected on the program suggest that: students rate it highly and use the framework; faculty enjoy the learning activities and become aware of business and industry needs; and until this program, faculty had not thought much about business and industry needs. (SM)

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Contextual Teaching and Learning in Preservice Teacher Education

Presented at the National Conference on Teacher Quality
Washington, DC
January 10, 2000

by

Richard L. Lynch
and
Michael J. Padilla

University of Georgia

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Session Description

This interactive session describes a three-year federally-funded project that is attempting to bring together classroom and real-life experiences in a way that could change how teachers are taught and what and how they are taught to teach. The College of Education at the University of Georgia is developing and testing a new teacher education model that will teach and place prospective students not only in the context in which they will work - the classroom - but also in the contexts where their students will work - community and workplace settings. Over 30 faculty are involved from 9 departments in the College of Education and 4 departments from the College of Arts and Sciences as well as business and industry partners, the local Chamber of Commerce, school administrators, and academic and occupational teachers from 6 counties.

Brief History and Overview of the Exemplary Practice

The College of Education at UGA was one of several institutions awarded a U.S. Department of Education contract in 1998 to develop a model of excellence for contextual teaching and learning (CTL) in preservice education or professional development. The overall goal of the UGA project is to develop and implement a preservice teacher education model that:

- *Is based upon a theoretical framework of contextual teaching and learning that is literature-based and locally developed;*
- *Permits preservice teacher education students to complete a program of courses, seminars, and community/work experiences based upon contextual teaching and learning principles;*
- *Utilizes a broad range of contexts (school, community, workplaces) both to inform teaching and learning and to provide a place for it to occur;*
- *Allows preservice teacher education students to experience contextual teaching and learning and relevant assessment techniques in diverse settings;*
- *Provides opportunities for preservice teacher education students to reflect upon and to integrate*

their experiential learning into curriculum and pedagogy that reflect contextual principles and can be used in their own teaching;

- *Provides opportunities for faculty to experience community/work settings.*

To create initial direction for the project, a conceptual framework was created from a detailed review of literature and the thinking, reflection, and collaboration of project faculty. The framework builds considerably on the work previously completed at Ohio State University (in collaboration with Bowling Green State University). The theoretical underpinnings of the UGA framework rest on (a) the situated cognition literature, (b) constructivism, and (c) multiple intelligence theory. Specific outcomes have been developed for the program, faculty, and students.

UGA's project on contextual teaching and learning in preservice teacher education has focused on four types of activities:

- Conceptual Framework: Theorizing, reviewing the literature, developing, and defining the concept and providing examples of CTL for project faculty
- Professional Development: Faculty in the project participate in business internships, seminars with business people and educators, and on-site interviews to (a) enrich faculty understanding of CTL, (b) help them integrate more context-based teaching strategies into their existing courses, and (c) help them develop new components of the program model
- Program Design: Design and implement CTL concepts and strategies into core and content courses for a cohort or community of learners
- Evaluation: Ongoing examination of processes and results of efforts to accomplish project goals, including research and dissemination activities.

In preparation for actual curriculum, course, and instructional reform, one of the most significant professional development activities for project faculty consisted of their immersion in work-based learning. Five local area businesses, in collaboration with the local Chamber of Commerce, provided

tours, speakers, on-site observations, time to interview with workers and managers, and internships to project faculty in May and throughout the summer. The purposes of these activities were to help University faculty: (a) understand how to prepare future teachers to make classroom teaching and learning more relevant to the world of work; (b) learn about current, practical applications of content area disciplines in workplaces and what is expected of workers in modern technical and professional work settings; and (c) begin to identify experiences that can be designed for preservice students in teacher education programs to help them learn about work contexts and applications to teaching/learning in various subjects.

To date, project faculty and advisory groups have primarily: (a) agreed upon the initial conceptual framework for contextual teaching and learning to guide our work, (b) taught a pilot CTL section of the sophomore core educational psychology course, (c) organized several faculty professional development activities (see above), (d) developed (now teaching) a pilot CTL section of the core sophomore/junior foundations of education course, (e) planned 3 seminars for students on sources of discipline knowledge, academic community learning, and work-based learning, (f) finalized the design for the model, and (g) collected and analyzed much formative data.

The specific components of the redesigned teacher education program model at UGA include:

- **Pre-professional Courses:** Educational Psychology (Learning and Development) and Educational Foundations are existing, required courses for teacher education majors and are being revised to include contextual teaching and learning principles.
- **Community Work Experiences:** Service Learning is an existing course involving service projects in various community agencies, programs, or settings. A new course to be developed by project faculty will introduce other structured field experience opportunities (internships in business, industry, or professional work settings) for teacher education students.
- **Seminars:** A new series of seminars is being developed to reflect upon how field experiences

connect education and the world outside of schools. They will include:

- Disciplinary Knowledge: Basic Principles and Ways of Knowing
- Workplace and Community Experiences: Connecting Academic Learning to Out-of-Classroom Contexts
- Contextual Teaching and Learning in Schools

- **Disciplinary Courses:** Required courses in methods of teaching and subject matter disciplines will be revised to incorporate contextual teaching and learning examples and concepts so that students can experience and apply these strategies within the subjects they teach in school settings.

Institutional Mission and Context

The University of Georgia in Athens is a vibrant campus of 30,300 students, qualifying as both the oldest state-chartered land-grant college in the nation and consistently as a nationally recognized Research I institution. It is often referred to as the flagship in Georgia's system of 34 state-sponsored public higher education institutions. Thirteen schools and colleges, with auxiliary divisions, carry on the University's programs of teaching, research, and service.

The College of Education is the University's second largest college (the College of Arts and Sciences is first) and probably is one of the largest colleges of education in the nation. The College has been in existence in some form since 1908. Today, there are about 225 tenured or tenure-earning faculty, another ~150 academic professionals and credentialed support staff, over 400 graduate assistants, and nearly 5,000 majors (about 3,000 undergraduates and 2,000 graduate students) and another ~500 certification only. There are 18 undergraduate majors offered in the college and over 90 graduate programs. The College is by far the largest K-12 teacher preparation program in the state, with about 750 B.S. Ed degrees awarded last year. The College is consistently ranked by *U.S. News and World Report* as one of the best colleges of education in the country.

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The College is decentralized into 4 schools: Leadership and Lifelong Learning, Teacher Education, Health and Human Performance, and Professional Studies; 20 departments are dispersed throughout the schools.

Key Partnership Representatives

Two schools, The School of Leadership and Lifelong Learning and the School of Teacher Education, are assuming major leadership for this project. Faculty and students from the Departments of Mathematics Education, Science Education, Social Science Education, Language Education, Middle Schools Education, Social Foundations of Education, and Occupational Studies are principally involved. In addition, the School of Professional Studies is contributing faculty from the Departments of Educational Psychology and Measurement, Instructional Technology, and Counseling and Human Services. The College of Arts and Sciences has faculty from Botany, Genetics, History, and Mathematics contributing to the project.

Community partners include the Athens Area Chamber of Commerce and its affiliated businesses and industries and six local school systems. An Advisory Committee for the project includes members from several local businesses as well as 12 academic and occupational teachers from area middle and high schools.

Formative Evaluation

Through our system of data collection and analysis, we can report the following at this time:

- Student ratings for courses are unusually high for an undergraduate class. Courses infusing CTL are rated "highly valuable" and students especially rated and complimented the applications item(s) highly.
- In pre- and post-testing, students provided more than 3 times the number of subject matter applications of the content they will teach.
- Students were "doing it," according to the framework we had established emanating from

situated cognition, community of learning, multiple intelligences, diversity, etc.

- Faculty enjoyed the summer internship experiences and tours of industries, were able to make further connections between the classrooms, workplace, and CTL framework, and used information from the experiences to create products and ideas for the classroom (i.e., in arts and sciences and methods and curriculum in teacher education).
- Faculty learned about the needs of business and industry, especially the characteristics and skills that employers are looking for in new employees and how to use local business and industry for educational purposes.
- It is apparent from student and professors' journals, professors' evaluation, and interviews that some (including professors) knew little of the reality of workplaces and hadn't really thought much about how knowledge is used and transferred; nearly all seemed surprised at employers' concern about high school graduates' lack of basic and social skills; and there was strong evidence of employer and employees' interests and thoughts on education. All wanted to talk about teaching, learning, and public education.

For more information on this model preservice teacher education program, contact:

Dr. Richard L. Lynch, Director
School of Leadership and Lifelong Learning
The University of Georgia
129 River's Crossing; 850 College Station Road
Athens, GA 30602-4812
Phone: 706-542-3891
e-mail: rlynch@coe.uga.edu

Dr. Michael J. Padilla, Director
School of Teacher Education
The University of Georgia
316 Aderhold
Athens, GA 30602
Phone: 706-542-4047
e-mail: mpadilla@coe.uga.edu